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# MELODY

By OSCAR BIE

**M**ELODY is the coin of the grand, vast, beautiful realm of Music, as it passes through our hands. It is the clearest and most tangible recollection of music which we possess, and the form in which we assimilate it. Very generally speaking, we understand music in the aggregate as melody, and there are many persons who listen to music only for its melody, and reject it when they can hear none. Herein they do music a grievous wrong. Music is melody—but it is also harmony, and rhythm, too. To be sure, there is hardly any one who, under the influence of rhythm alone, evolves music from his inner consciousness (Beethoven possibly did so at times); and even fewer are those who mentally reproduce music as a succession of harmonies only—and such could be found solely among highly trained professional musicians of wellnigh subtle refinement. No, melody abides as the outward manifestation of all music, whereby it is apprehended, assumes a definite outline, and none the less reveals its whole soul. As melody it accompanies us through life, now bearing on its wings the healing of some hurt, now soaring aloft, upborne on some delight; here shortening a wearisome way, and there prolonging a fair daydream; ever ready, in fine, to lend our emotions that decorative line which elevates them above the commonplace and resolves them into a cosmic philosophy; and so life becomes bearable, and our every moment is crowned with some memory, musically fragrant, of something beloved, or heard, or known, that once bore fruit within us. There are times when the melody we happen to be humming does not seem to fit the case—a phrase from *Faust*, or *Cavalleria*, or even *Mignon*, as a relief from some domestic aggravation or from an unmasked deception; or maybe a line of *Die Walküre* while watering flowers or reading a letter—but, after all, each answers the purpose.

But now I shall be serious—although this playful, associative activity of melody within the recesses of our brain strikes me as highly essential—and attempt a definition. Every definition falsifies. Thus, as a definition, it is quite correct that music divides into these three elements: The melodic, or succession of tones;

the harmonic, their sounding together; and the rhythmic, the measurement of their time-intervals. But the value of this conception is philosophical rather than practical. True enough, music possesses these three elements of song, of framework, of measured motion; they constitute its three atmospheres, in which it touches the earth; and everything that has voice and seeks expression and a style for the manifestation of its inner life will find in melody the consummation of its longing, as everything that builds and piles up and gathers things into bounded and orderly relations must find its paradise in the harmony of chords, and everything that moulds this incomprehensibly eternal, endlessly and tirelessly onrolling, unremittingly urgent and all-conquering, overwhelming Time into measure and form must set up rhythm as its law. These elements which attain, in music, to Style, Form, and Unity, are cosmic impulses, symbols of the universal artistic endeavor, verities of limitless horizon. In reality, however, they do not lie side by side, but, as in the world of matter, they interpenetrate and intermingle, and, indeed, are so interactive and interdependent that the one appears hardly possible without the other.

The moment we conceive a melody as a succession of tones, it hovers incorporeal unless we straightway stabilize it harmonically and rhythmically. We mentally supply to it a harmony which, perhaps, we have heard so often that it has passed into our subconsciousness; or we construct one below it quite involuntarily, vague at the outset, following (as it were) the principal curves of its rise and fall; finally trying it, let us say, at the piano and bringing it into satisfactory shape. And, similarly, the melody directly finds its rhythmical form, assumes measure and metre, retards or accelerates; for without such time-division we should have a feeling of emptiness and vacillation, as of melody wandering in a timeless void. Hence, it follows that it may be scientifically correct to consider a melody merely as a succession of tones occupying time; but, artistically, it cannot be divorced from a consciousness of harmony and rhythm, because just through these it gains an individuality of nature, its soul, which is no random juxtaposition of tones thrown down like a dicer's cast, but the contour of an expression rooted in the elements of all art.

Indeed, we must go still further, and detach ourselves from Melody regarded as a strictly-bounded concept—a piece of flesh carved out of the body of Music, so to speak—that we may grasp the idea of its nature as the melody universal which, above and beyond the soul of the individual living melody, embraces all that

has movement and duration in the sphere of tones. Not merely do we intuitively hear a harmony beneath the melody; in the harmony, too, we intuitively feel the melody; and the manner in which the harmonies themselves regulate the intelligible chords—the “harmony universal” likewise thrones above the living “chord”—takes its direction from melodic laws and the feeling for melody. The melodic element gives the chords substance, type and form precisely as the rhythmic element moulds the melodic. All are intermingled, and change their shape with the epoch. The eighteenth century was architectonic in its harmony; it ordered the succession of chords according to the rather narrow limitations of a style fathered by a conventional circle of fifths—Tonic, Dominant and Subdominant, Mediant, etc.—with a mathematical exactitude which became a “School.” Above this framework it erected the melody along somewhat constricted lines, thus establishing from below an harmonico-melodic unity. Our modern time has come to the contrary procedure. It has suspended the harmonies from the superposed melodic line, which no longer shrank from chromatic excesses; it has projected its sense of melody down into the chords, imparting to them their (still entirely organic) connection through the animated soul of the melody-line—a victory of expression over symmetry. The further back it pushed that symmetrical melody of the earlier architectural epoch, the more universally melodic grew its feeling; instead of a “melody,” the melody universal began to hold sway—endless melody, as it is often called. All this is simply a compromise between the harmonic and melodic principles. Formerly the harmonic principle leaned to the melodic, because the harmony was already felt in the melody. To-day the reverse is the case. At all events, the entire sense-effect of melody rests not merely on the clear-cut phrase, but spreads over the total complex of the tonal movement in chord and melody.

Returning to the melody itself, we shall now comprehend that it no longer suffices us to label the ordinary, popular, straitly-limited tune as melody, but that we must recognize every melodic phrase, whether short or long, whether question or answer, whether finished or fragmentary, as an appreciable form of melodic expression. The melody which runs along above the harmonies as a distinctly drawn outline in the treble is only a part of that great realm of expression which reveals itself here in a phrase of three tones and there in the broad sweep of an extended chain of harmonies. Accordingly, our conception of the melody-element divides into the *general*, which covers the entire wave-movement

of music, and the *particular*, which specifies the tonally limited field of some special desire for expression (with as many contours as one will). From a blurred *glissando* up to a sharply defined song-melody, all steps of the series are herewith included. The intermediate links supply the fruitful nuances. For, when a form in art is erected into a principle, it becomes lifeless. But when a principle seeks after forms, plenitude of life results. Such is the case here.

Now, when we disengage the melody from the general wave-movement of the music, to fix its individual contour or contours, we plainly perceive that it must find its most pregnant expression in these latter. The chord-movement is a heavy mass lacking, as it were, a voice. From out of this heavy mass the voice of melody escapes as a sensible phenomenon. And it reveals itself to us, not as the stupid and exclusive "popular" melody, but as a form wherein a particle of the nature of music reaches the goal of its ultimate endeavor.

The popular melody soars aloft in the treble above the accompaniment; outwardly it is the highest and most penetrating factor in the musical ensemble, and the untrained ear accepts it as the adequate total impression of the music. But the real melody is neither above, nor below, nor in the middle, nor at any established place according to pitch; it should be conceived solely according to its breadth, its lateral extension, whatever position in the ensemble its course may occupy. And here we arrive at the second problem in melody—its Geology; the first, as above, being its Nature.

The geology of melody is the theory of its position amid the strata of the music as built up or developed, its place in the lower, intermediate, or higher regions. The notion that it is usually at the top is not simply a merely popular one, but also a mistaken one. For example, there have been times when the high male voice in the choir carried the melody (whence its appellation, "tenor"), against which the upward-striving voice was called "alto," and the contrapuntal highest part "discant." And so this melody-bearing voice may now sing in the depths, now in the middle region, and again on the heights, at the composer's pleasure. The musician finds no difficulty in conceiving the whole play of figurate tones around a mid-central *cantus firmus* as a sort of accompaniment, or in subordinating all the higher parts to a melody-bearing bass. For him there is here no more Over or Under than in infinite space. And nevertheless, the veritably irruptive, liberative, illuminative modern melody will always abide aloft, will be

borne by the violins, oboes, trumpets, sopranos, not by bassoons or double-basses, because only in this region does it assume that radiant, overmastering temper which is adequate to such demands. For the geology of melody has grown from a science into an art; the melody-stratum has character and color, thus enhancing its capacity for expression. The Ninth Symphony gives a grand recitative to the basses, thereby showing forth the struggle of nether powers; sung by sopranos, it would have seemed childish. To a mournful viola or a penetrative 'cello one entrusts central melodies betokening a hidden grief that dreads the light. But in the sextet of *The Bartered Bride* the soprano overrides all the lower degrees to intensify the splendor and mastery of emotion.

The conception of "accompaniment" has also grown out of history into life. Among the ranks of the bourgeoisie the naked melody doubtless hankers after the garb of a chordal accompaniment, and develops recognizably only when supported by the harmonies of some extraneous music-apparatus. Then it stands forth in yet balder relief, dragging the chords behind it as satellites. But one should not despise it on that account. Such a trailing accompaniment is by no means on the level of a figured bass, nor is it an elaboration of musico-theoretical study. It has grown into the likeness of a sweet repose on the pillows of the familiar chords, whereon the melody lies in a very tidy and conscious loveliness. The chords on the lute—and the lighter the better, the more Italian the more amiable—are a charming decoration which lends a mundane setting to the vital energy of the melody. It is the imperishable charm of all serenades.

Out of the rigid thorough-bass the accompaniment unfolds itself through rhythmical chords into all the independent phenomena that reflexively awaken in its own body. Not a voice therein but craves to live its own—that is, a melodic—life; to tread the ladder of harmonies with emotional or even sportive step down into the facile, dramatic rivalries of their geological strata, upheaved according to age and importance as a playground for the powers of the interacting voices. What, then, remains as accompaniment? The conception of accompaniment exists by reason of contrast to the hegemony of melody, wherefrom it is inseparable—its lowly handmaid, the shadow thrown by its light. But the writer of its history would have to enumerate the thousandfold nuances whereby the accompaniment becomes a picture, a painting, which intentionally avoids or emphasizes the elaboration of details, melodically emancipates or domesticates itself, according to position and class of its melody and the standard of the

period. He who, endowed with fullness of knowledge and a wealth of imagination, will follow the series from the old secco recitative up to the *Lied* of Hugo Wolf, can finish the picture for himself. The whole represents the train, and at the same time the triumph, of the goddess Melody.

But the play grows more involved; the melody not only favors the train of satellites in the accompaniment, but also permits the simultaneous emergence of other melodies which are in any way harmonically related to it, and thus are, or become, contrapuntally engaged. The contrasting of diverse melodies, first of all a proof of technical artistry, became thereafter a means for complicated expression, which not only displays the contrasted melodies, but also their common atmosphere. When every-day folk-tunes were thrust into medieval Masses, the resulting complex was a mere play of the labeller's art supported by a total uncomprehension of characteristic values in melody. It is a more recent bit of sentimentality to consider melody bound by text. Only in later times did it become a matter of conscience in music that a melody should maintain its character even in variations. Even now it is hardly a generally accepted maxim that a contrapuntal tone-painting should present a picture of stormy emotions which strive to unify their motives after contest and counterplay. This is most fully attained in the German opera. When Wagner contrapuntally clashes theme against theme, motive against motive, to recall earlier scenes, they form the desired picture of a musical collision of divergent emotions. Therefore, certain passages in *Tristan* will stand for ever as a triumph of counterpoint; it is no clever conceit nor skill in art that guides these furiously interwrithing melodic lines—it is poignant emotion. Here the sensitive ear realizes to the full the charm of the possibilities indwelling in polyphonic climaxes.

The purest form of melodic geology is straight polyphony with a total absence of accompanying parts. Musicians of the middle ages, possessing the conception of melody as a pleasure, to be sure, but not as a function, let the chorus-parts run on in undesigned contours in such wise that, at their points of meeting, undesigned harmonies resulted. Modern music developed its conscious aims out of both processes, and thus created what we term functional melody and harmony. While developing the progression of the single part in its most abstract purity, guided by the most abstract laws of harmonic suggestion, it created the forms of the Fugue, wherein nothing but melodies run on above and below each other in such consistent fashion that not only is the sensuous property of melody set aside, but even the isolated charm

of melody is renounced in favor of a compulsory polyphony. This is the veritable "pure culture" of the naked melody. Wholly undraped, it now becomes a study of action in music—a study unsurpassable for its instructiveness and in structural exposition; a metaphysical portrayal of beauty which carries out the harmonic possibilities of melody into its Olympic impassibility, wherein harmonies and melodies appear wellnigh undistinguished. Here melody wins final mastery over the entire body musical; its geological triumph, before which the human individuality sinks, devout and awe-stricken, to the ground. There is nothing left to desire or chance. For melody, one can scarce speak of melody. It is a phenomenon of Nature, and so imposing that haply we are sometimes compelled to take thought of it when hearing a choral fugue by Bach, just that we may not speak of it. When we have made up our minds to it, when aught of the kindly and emotional nature of melody should hover over these lines—then we sound the depths of the shattered soul of man.

Thus we pass into the third realm of melody—from its phenomenology through its geology to its chronology. Such are the several reactions of times, races, and humanity, upon this phenomenon. Melody, as the expression of psychical emotions, pushes out variously in succeeding epochs; it is capable of variation according to the content and form it receives from a climate; it is shaded according to the instrument to which it is confided—instrument or human voice. Thus, wrapped up in its chronology, we also find a multifold ethnology.

Wafted from the Orient comes the melodic arabesque. Born vocally, and with a plaintive human thrill even when transferred to an instrument, it sways in sweeping, wayward surges which seemingly tend nowhither, which tolerate no supporting harmonies, and bear to us a final living reminder of the ancient Greek monody that followed, without harmonic support, the rise and fall of the voice with the subtlest enharmonic inflections. In the Orient of to-day it has become an intoxication with the agile and ever-fluctuating play of tones that seem to burst like an ecstatic cadence from the soul, in a flight toward limitless horizons whither the inner vision dreamily gazes after. Now and again on desert journeyings, or when the mule-drivers of Eastern lands are singing to the monotonous tramp of their caravans, such melody may caressingly steal into European ears, in its native vigor and artlessness. In our ritual it runs a more measured course, where its elementary forces play around the rock of Gregorian chant, or where, in the Hebraic rites, its long, silky fringes trail downward



from the weft of national tradition. To all this, Protestantism opposed the straitly delimited song of the West in serried, armorclad ranks—an earthly chorale pitted against the chaunts of Heaven. But the playful arabesque, mindful of its ethnological tint, overscapes in many ways into our Western art-style, brightening it with scintillant gems. The Neapolitan arabesque, a tone-slide in thirds, a siroccolet of all cadenzas, is like a flash of Saracenic soul-life. In Cornelius' opera *The Barber of Bagdad* the muezzin's call seems an incrustation of Oriental enamel; though wrapt in the ecstasy of swaying *melos*, it nevertheless is welded in the school of the Occidental fugato. And the plaintive strain in *Tristan*—not Orient, not Occident, neither Celtic nor any other exotic tone-tracery, invested with the colorful charm of all aloofness of mood, seemingly unharmonic, cradled in the self-enjoyment of the English horn, self-questioning and self-answering—this strain is a marvellously kaleidoscopic concept of non-European melody, yet, even so, merged in our musical system and, after its monodic outbreathing into empty air, caught up by the chromatic stream of the work to settle on the ground of our art.

In contrast with the melting charm of the exotic, there stands, ready from early times in its trim and prim toilet, the songlet of the West. Born, not of aimlessly onrolling monodies, but of the rhythmically measured dance, it kept pace in growth with the dance. Still encumbered with heavy and awkward movements corresponding to a yet unawakened space-perception, it is readier than "official" music in assimilating its melody, which, circulating within the natural "circle of fifths," with slender resources wins the mastery over that primitive round of variations on a few alternating tones to which the folk-song owes its yet undiminished charm. What a vast deal can be done with C and E and G, with a little D and F in between, not to mention a side-trip to A! Now engage the support of nearly-related keys, draw some few effective parallel lines, build up your melody essentially in gable-form, and you have something quite unsurpassable. If you diagrammatize the structural development of old folk-songs, you will obtain a line recurring with the regularity of a law of nature. In this ever-repeated conformability to law, in the strophic phrasing, in the accommodation of the text to the unvarying musical pattern, there lies a pride of sentiment. Whatever Fate may bring will be moulded into the selfsame and ever-revivified mass of beautiful musical thought, wherein it is translated into a celestial eternity—not the fatalistic state of the Orient, but the purposeful life of the Occident. As I write these lines, old warsongs are resounding

about me. By whom were their melodies conceived? They are nameless—and ownerless, too. They have belonged to centuries that assuaged their griefs by singing these same melody-lines in thousandfold repetition. And through this they have only gained in power of expression, for they are laden with memories. Melody is the magnet in music. It attracts every emotion brought within its sphere, and grows in attractiveness with the growth of the material it works upon.

Melody appeals to the great races according to its structure. Each of the peculiarly musical peoples possesses its specific melody; and through all mixing of the races this melody has still retained its own features and its individual style of movement. The extremes are found in Italian and German melody.

Italian melody, entirely vocal in conception, is of marvellous delicacy and pliancy, full of passion and dreadfully self-seeking. It goes into ecstasies over its own existence, and exults in all the dramatic poses which the political fashion of its homeland may suggest. Owing to the elasticity of the Italian throat, it has never taken on very set or precise forms; it has possessed itself of the wealth of embellishment which adorns ancient music like a blossomy shower of rococo delights, and made a sport thereof, swinging and swaying in airy flight to glide up and down the scale, through *portamento* and *staccato*, exhausting every rhythm and all possibilities of the vocal register. Around a faint, melancholy ground-harmony, a vestige yet remaining from the genuine folksong, it weaves the glamour of artistry. Whether in the crinoline of by-gone fashion, or the abrupt emphasis of modern style, or in the heyday of Rossinian song, which right royally puffed out the *floriture* of the human larynx into the buoyant air, this melody is always and everywhere the expression of Melody as such—a striving for the obvious and ear-tickling emergence of the solo part and the sensuous charm of its flowing outline. It delights in its members, and will practise no full self-denial for the sake of any theory or any taste whatsoever, even though dashed into atoms therefor. It rules its music, fashions it, illumines it, and gives it the final form wherein it continues to exist. And over that music it still hovers long as an idolized goddess whose cult is the innate disposition of the race.

German melody has grown through restraints. In the grand style it is ashamed of its nude existence, and gladly borrows any manner of excuse for being. From early times it has confided itself to instruments; not (like Italian melody) as a means of more extended virtuosity, but as if it found therein its peculiar calm

and wordless fatherland, where it can tell of its feelings in admirably symbolic song. In this field it has elevated the form of thematic work to a method, and developed instrumental melodic speech both in the symphony and the symphonic opera to a rare height of mysticism and an extraordinary manifestation. It taught the German musician to understand melody from this aspect, so that frequently enough he accepted its stiff and pedantic lines as a standard for his invention; an admirable example of this we find in Tannhäuser's song to Venus. But then another vehicle of expression was put in its way—none other than language. Not the Word, the Text, whose tatters the Italian flourishes in autocratic musical revel, but the language, this so highly cultivated, autonomous, and, in itself, submusical speech with every rhythm known to the phrase, to verse and to verbal inflection. Slowly awakening out of eighteenth-century formalism, German melody presses on to an ever-closer union with speech, following it through strophe and sentence, and finally in the expression of the single word. Whatever it lost thereby as regards the absolute beauty of vocal display, it gained in sincerity and depth of feeling. This melody, in the *Lied* and in the opera, is not masterful, but disciplined; it does service to music and to truth. It does not prink—it attires itself. It does not post its nakedness behind transparent veils, but enhances by means of its robe the purity of motion of its body. And thus, in full consciousness, it has gone forward from Mozart down to Brahms. Through this process of restraint it clings far more closely to the creative personality, and individualizes itself far more variously, than in the formal scheme of Italy. Thus it becomes all soul, having fought its way through all restraints of its own choosing and so, purified by opposition joyously endured, breaking forth in its loftiest moments in such irresistible power of expression and impassioned self-revelment, that we award it the crown of suffering.

These are the merest outlines of the nature of melody, as deduced from the material historically collected in the form of general characteristics which are familiar to us all because daily reiterated in actual examples. Between these extremes lie two other melody-groups having equally well-known characteristics. Russian melody has never succeeded in establishing a wholly specific style. It vacillates between its old national motives, strongly Slavic in color, sweet and sad with rhythmic trot, and the powerful influences of romantic Germany. On the other hand, French melody has found a more positive unity betwixt virtuosity and romanticism, through which it has gained a wide

ascendancy. Always subtly influenced by the national half-sentimental, half-coquettish *chanson*, thrilled by a lively feeling for the seductively emotional line of lyric *melos*, wholly devoted to the generous expression of a highly susceptible passion, and presently carried away on the wings of soul-stirring, sharply accented rhythm, French melody has become the worldwide melody, the unconditionally melodic melody, beautiful melody in itself, which has maintained its secular universality amidst Italian *bravura*, German depth of feeling, Russian sadness, English dance-acrobatics, the Vienna waltz, and all the Habaneras, Krakoviaks, Polkas and Czardas, with their endless variety of national cadences. How utterly, in this French melody, is Melody the soul of Music, and Music the soul of the World!

The great boon of melody—of that melody which is called, so very simply and unhesitatingly, “beautiful” melody—is variously apportioned at different periods and to different peoples. To-day it is of peculiar interest to us from the circumstance that, realizing how barren of melody is our time—though probably quite justifiably so—we none the less yearn for the opposite condition. To us melody seems the steadfast and sonorous ideal of a culture whose course of development is external, whose style is manifest to the senses, whose form and pose are the result of long experience, and which is so obliging as to express its whole soul in this ingratiating profile; an ideal which seeks, in place of artistry and erudition, a language from and of the people and acceptable and familiar to the people. We say: For us, melody is lost. We say: Our music and our nature are absorbed in a spasmodic polyphony, avoid the simply natural, accept mind for feeling and aloofness for experience, and are blindly committed to their selfness and their materialism. Be ours once again the lovely line of heart-revelation, and the grateful tones of a resolute conviction! Does such melody still exist, or was it used up in times past, and become a mere fraudulent plagiarism? Are the permutations exhausted, through which the melodic possibilities of these few tones could find expression? Is melody a form of earlier epochs—a form which, once non-existent, is again to vanish utterly? I am almost inclined to think so, although it were presumption to disprove some unknown genius of the future by an historical calculus. At all events, melody is to-day a fossil museum-exhibit, an echo from hearts of by-gone days, elusive to every form of social endeavor. For it is the real individual element in music; it is a most personal reaction—almost a romantic heirloom in these times of polyphonic organization and promoters’ carousal, both peaceful and

warlike. It is buried deep in the earth—and it waiting. Its great inventors—Mozart, Schubert—sing to us out of a far-away time when, amid all turmoil, one still possessed a gardenplot which one might fill, like a bird, with life and song.

This history of melody presents itself to us in a series of polar contrasts, which we select as points of intersection to show, by these same personal reactions of the inventors on the nature of melody, how it grew and advanced to extinction. They must serve us as samples, taken at random, of the whole unsurveyable course of development.

Mozart became the transcendent prophet of melody. For us he is the culmination of that architectural epoch in music which builds up member on member according to formal laws, towering to a point of highest energy infused with emotion in so far as the architectural plan does not interfere with it. Here not only every composition, and each measure of every composition, whether in opera, sonata or chamber-music, strews its blooms along a topmost line, the chosen favorite that controls and illumines the whole construction; but this line is fashioned with all the psychic flexibility of which the musical imagination is capable. For this melody the music lives, and lives through it and in it throughout all times and in all spheres. With Beethoven this is no longer the case. In his music, rhythm is the groundwork, if anything is to be singled out as the controlling element. Upon this rhythm rise harmony and melody as built up by his will. Melody is there, but not as final arbiter; it becomes a theme, a motive, it showers blossoms on the weft, it transforms phrases into concrete organisms; finally, in the slow movements and important arias, it emerges for once in full earnest as a broad, swelling stream, but, in this very case, as conscious melody, as one melodic form among many, as *characteristic*—precisely as all things new or old live in his works only in so far as they can take on character. And because melody with Mozart is the essence, and with Beethoven the means, the former artist's attitude towards it is more equable; whereas Beethoven's attitude turns into a struggle, a contention against the merely sensuous, merely amiable content of melody, from the conventionalities of his first Rondos to the broad plains of his last Quartets, where melody is wholly assimilated into his personal speech. The natural expression of melody has retreated into the material to be formed.

A similar difference, though in another direction, exists between the melody-invention of Rossini and Wagner. I do not compare them from the moral point of view. But Rossini is a

tremendous melodist, because he founds all his music solely on the solistic play within the singer's larynx, and, but slightly burdened by feeling, does nothing but put fine phrases into his mouth wherewith he can excel. This melody wings aloft, untrammelled by speech or emotion. It rejoices in its volatile, untrammelled existence, owning only so much that is material as its own element, the air, requires. For this reason it is not at all difficult with regard to its body. It permits variations and *floriture* in accordance with that ancient law of sensuality which allows seduction to choose her own artifices as mood and opportunity may dictate—the more so, as it recognizes no inner obligation for the course of the melody, knowing naught of its firm substance or essential character. All the old composers wrought in variations in so far as melody, for them, was no more than an outward form, a beautiful succession of notes; and how far this traffic in variation extends into our own time, when even Liszt did not hesitate to dish up *Don Giovanni* or Schubert melodies for the edification of virtuosi! Such things are impossible in Wagnerian circles. Melody, for them, is an indestructible entity in no wise to be made a sport of, possessed in the highest degree of characteristic expression and inviolable symbolism. The variation of the melodic motive does not result in virtuosity, but becomes the mirror of a psychological transformation. And there is no melody, even one so precisely delimited as that of the "winter storms," that may not again be turned into a motive. Nor is there any song (and foremostly in *Tristan*) that will not in itself be a melody for ever; in *Tristan*, indeed, the everlasting soulfelt song-melody, a tale in tone out of speech into music, and one bearing so little the outward form of melody that it suddenly reveals its inner strength in unimagined breadth and power. This melody abides on the earth, abides in the speech, abides in the soul, and the further it advances with Wagner's development, the freer it grows of verse, of song-form, of refrain and repetition; in character and motive as with Beethoven, although applied to the sensualism of the stage in the most unsensual form. Rossini's bird soared away through the air; Wagner's motive is caught back into music.

Schubert and Schumann. — Schubert's tender melodic soul loves singularity—oneness. The singular in melody, the charming thought, the folk-tunelike touch, the amiable return to the tonic, the emotional climax—all these he cultivates as one tends flowers; he pets them, admires them, waters them, and sets them in little pots in the midst of a large and artistic work which appears to interest him only as a frame, as a bed. These flowerets of his are

more original than Mozart's, who had merely a sort of artificially overlaid, Magic-Fluty penchant for folk-song, and aspired to broader fields in the culture of melody. Schumann's melody resembles Schubert's in point of singularity; but it is more reflective. It is not romantic, but romanticistic, and loves the fragrance of flowers less for the flowers' sake than for the fragrance itself. His melody is borne on by strong, intense feeling, reared on memories of everything good in joy or sorrow; as a poet seeks to catch the strains that float through the forest or sweep through the ball-room. This melody has passed through the hearts of men, but was taken down to paper. It does not remain melody pure and simple, like Schubert's, but becomes a motive, a theme, an association, and presents the symbol of a sphere whence it escaped into the realm of art. When it goes over from the instrumental to the vocal, it gains in substance and stability, makes good its claim to a place, as it were, in the soil tilled by literature, to a meaning clarified by the use of words, and discloses powers of the loftiest truth of expression. Schubert's *Lied* is melody; Schumann's is an avowal. These are always the poles—Melody, and the Melodic. On the one hand, Nature; on the other, History.

Chopin and Liszt.—Chopin's impressionable soul finds a melody so full of weird geniality and remotest beauties, that it cannot play and ply enough therein, holding a creative revel, and all on this sole instrument—itself astounded at its own singing. To his caressing finger the melody seems a thing alive. He takes even the acquired virtuosity of the pianoforte into his psychic inventory, and conjures therefrom undreamt-of melodic blooms which drape the lines of the song evoked by the keys with flowery festoons of impassioned fantasy. The exotic element lends its glamour to the charm of the melody-line, inseparable from the sprinkled harmony. Every upward glance, every momentary musing, every dream and every vision, grows to a fairy tale woven of melody, of one melody or as many as three together—so many melodically active layers as may be wrought out with two hands. A wealth of profoundest, and yet not at all sentimental, emotions, of extreme, yet not in the least decadent, musical invention, streams out, binding melodic garlands with infinitely distinguished tact, embroidering melodic ornaments, sketching melodiously on and on in all love and delicacy with the subtlest pencil known to this art, even in passages of most knightly exaltation. What renders Liszt the compeer of Chopin is the sovereign mastery (equally over the virtuose elements), the bearing of a man of the world, the imperial sureness wherewith this art is showered upon

us in an ecstasy of untrammelled freedom overcast with a slight shade of exotic melancholy. But Chopin serves as a lord; Liszt lords it as a servant. Liszt is not love of creation, of invention, of expression through an art subdued to his will; he is love of the world, human kindness, the fullness of that mighty Power that controls every means for the fabrication of a certificate of musical efficiency. His music is not what it fain would be—it only makes a proposition to that effect. It does not rise superior to superficial brilliancy and the prepotency of sensuous effect, however it may convert their use to lofty aims. It has neither the repose nor the intimacy and self-containedness of Chopin's; he imparts a stimulus, and leaves it to friends and pupils, to life and art, to provide the reaction. Hence, Liszt's melody, though seemingly never so deepdrawn, is empty, and his invention, opulent as it is, falls short. The "Gretchen" melody in the second movement of his Faust symphony is of rare breadth—yet it is born of style. Liszt's melody, otherwise, consists of theme and motive, most ingeniously invented and clearly stated, but conceived and elaborated simply as a theme, repeated and split up and painstakingly shifted about during the course of the piece as often as the music-sheet may require. Both Chopin and Liszt have the *cachet* of French fantasy. But Chopin's wealth of invention flows from his fullness of emotion; Liszt's springs only from intelligence. For him melody—the bond between profound emotions striving for utterance and superhuman spiritual illumination—is a placard of mentality.

And so Melody, once Form, then Feeling, has now become Mind. In the world at large, let us set *La Traviata* over against *La Bohème*, or oppose *Carmen* to *Pelléas*; what has been going on? In *La Traviata*, feeling finds no rest until it has discovered its lovely, songful melody—a well-defined, exportable melody that delights in the sweep of its effectively directed course, wherein alone it lives; each more moving than the foregoing, each outdoing the other in passion, sticking at nothing to impose this euphonious convention upon a modern society-drama. In *La Bohème*, melody is shamefaced; however Italian and vocally supple it may bear itself, it seldom ventures to expand into an Aria or any other definable form; it divides and disperses into fine phrases and beginnings and closes, leaves many a needful finishing touch to the orchestra, and shrinks at doing final violence to the Word. Inasmuch as it would allow feeling a logical mode of expression, it obeys the demands of the mind, which ridicules the aria and recognizes only its semblance. In *Carmen*, melody gives free rein



to its temperament; caring little for the conscience of the text and of the isolated expression of feeling, it seeks rather to secure a totality of truthful expression by its tempestuous passion and—through a brilliant diversity in color and rhythm of the melodic line, fed by an unfailing imagination—by its own flesh and blood. Never have the flesh and blood of melody more genially created the body of an opera. This is flesh and blood of one who possessed the ability to invent and did not stand in awe of the intelligence. When *Pelléas* was created, this French virtue had given way before another—the mind. To a mind, unable to admit even the semblance of melody, but so clever and conscientious as to immolate this melody in favor of a loftier, chilly, rationalistic wisdom. Now our good melody is so thoroughly ashamed of its very existence that it has taken to itself wings and flown away, abandoning the field to a highly literary psalmody and an extremely picturesque orchestral accompaniment. It hardly dares raise its voice as the smallest motive. Melody (so says Mind) is childish and obsolete; one sings no melodies when moved—they are songs one learns!

Mind is right! 'tis a thing of the past. In Debussy's case Mind makes a virtue of necessity and resolves on consistency instead of compromise. How difficult the resolution, even though supported by modern music in its entirety! Here at home we are still romantic enough to take it hardly. Humperdinck, for one; he still sings melodies as our forefathers sang them. And Strauss? He, too, has been assailed by Mind. At moments it often happens in his works that the olden melody lays hold on him and, overcome, he throws himself into her arms. But still oftener, when he feels a trifle ashamed, he commandeers her for an accompanying music, for satire and farce, for the sake of style and color, down to the *Rosenkavalier* waltzes. What formerly was character and truth, seems now to be unattainable save as a memory, a product of the printed page. Melody will soon stand in the library and gather dust. Melody, the entity, has disappeared in the Melody Universal; together with the old, beautiful, personal world, it has vanished. And evermore, when a composer who is still able wholly to detach himself from the past, dares revel in it and dream of a future for it, he will fall a victim to the vengeance of a cruel destiny. Like me, myself, if I be mistaken. Then, may the Devil fly away with what I have written to relieve my troubled spirit concerning the rise and the downfall of melody.